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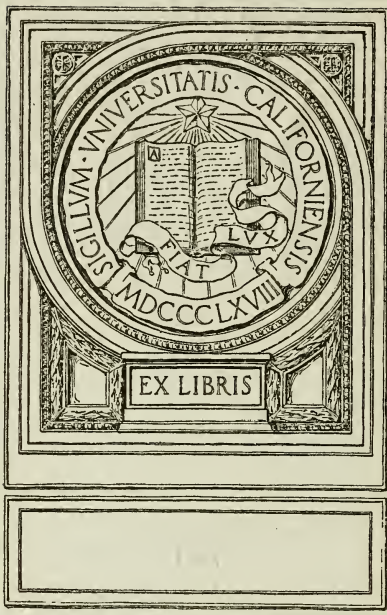
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APERS FOR WAR TIME. No. 4

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# Brothers All

The War and the Race Question

By

EDWYN BEVAN, M.A.

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## EXPLANATORY NOTE

GREAT BRITAIN is engaged in a war from which, as we believe, there was offered to our nation no honourable way of escape. The desire of all who love their country is to serve it in the hour of its need, and so to live and labour that those who have fallen in its service may not have died in vain. While this may suffice to make immediate duty clear, the war remains in the deepest sense a challenge to Christian thought. The present bitter struggle between nations which for centuries have borne the Christian name indicates some deep-seated failure to understand the principles of Christ and to apply them to human affairs.

This series of papers embodies an attempt to reach, by common thought, discussion and prayer, a truer understanding of the meaning of Christianity and of the mission of the Church to the individual, to society and to the world.

Those who are promoting the issue of these papers are drawn from different political parties and different Christian bodies. They believe that the truth they seek can be attained only by providing for a measure of diversity in expression. Therefore they do not accept responsibility for the opinions of any paper taken alone. But in spirit they are united, for they are one in the conviction that in Christ and in His Gospel lies the hope of redemption and health for society and for national life.

# BROTHERS ALL

## THE WAR AND THE RACE QUESTION

### THE MEETING OF THE RACES.

THE war which we are witnessing marks an epoch, not only in the history of England or of Europe, but in the history of mankind. If there were any spectator who, through the unnumbered ages, had followed the course of the creature called Man upon this planet, he would have seen naked cave-men, thousands of years ago, drive each other in pursuit and flight over the hill-sides with stones and clubs ; he would have seen, later on, the mail-clad armies of Assyria and Rome move over wide regions, sacking and slaying ; and in recent time he would have seen the still larger armies of Europeans fight with weapons that mowed men down at long range. But he would never have seen a war which engaged so large a part of the men upon earth, which affected, directly or indirectly, the whole world, as this war does. And the reason is that this war has come at the end of an epoch wherein a certain process, which our supposed spectator would be able to follow, has gone forward at a rate such as he would not have observed at any earlier time.

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That process is the formation in the human family of ever larger groups with common purposes, common interests and tasks. What made the process possible was a development by spasmodic steps forward, over the course of the centuries, in the means of communication. Intercourse of man with man among the cave-men had to depend upon speech and gesture ; the great States of antiquity had writing, and the speed of horses for traffic, and wind-wafted ships ; but in the last few generations the process has made a leap forward, with steam, electricity, petrol. The whole world has been bound together as never before. It has got, as it were, a single nervous system. The agitation in one part is communicated almost directly to other parts far away. The fall of the monarchy in Portugal caused concern, we were told, at the court of Peking. A war of the great nations, supervening upon such a state of the world, inevitably means a more widespread convulsion than any former war. Larger masses of men come into action, and can be handled organically : a battle has a front extending two hundred miles, and may require weeks to be fought out. Men of all races, in all continents, feel in their private lives the disturbance in the vast system of international business.

Now, before the war had come, this process of the drawing of the world together, this diminishing of distances, equivalent, in some of its effects, to a shrinkage of the surface of the globe, had brought up great problems for the new generation : and that because the human



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species thus drawn into closer contiguity was not all of one kind. The contact, as men then were, between alien races, was not altogether happy and comfortable. Masses of men were brought together before either side was ready for the encounter. What is called 'the Colour Question' had become acute in certain regions. Already, before the discovery of steam-power, advance in the art of navigation had made it possible for the white men of Europe to go to the lands inhabited by brown and black men in sufficient numbers to win a predominant position in far-off countries, and one may believe that even then the dark man was conscious that the intruder belonged to a widely different breed from himself. But the introduction of steam accentuated the difference; for as the journey became shorter, and the communication of the white man with his home became easier, he retained his European character and European interests with less adaptation to the new environment than his predecessors had done. It is said that the Englishmen in India before the Mutiny had a human relation with the people of the land such as the official of to-day, less high-handed indeed but more distant, is seldom able to establish. The new conditions at the same time made it easier for the peoples of Asia to go to countries occupied by Europeans, so that the contact of races took place, not only where the white man was the stranger, but where the brown or yellow man was the latest comer. Contact in either sphere brought its special variety of friction. We had not only unrest in India and anti-foreign feeling in China, but the

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thorny Indian question in South Africa and Canada, and the agitation against the yellow man in the United States.

### THE CO-OPERATION OF THE EAST.

And now we have suddenly ceased to talk of these questions. Instead, we find brown men and yellow men and black men joined with ourselves in one colossal struggle, pouring out their treasure, pouring out their blood, for the common cause—Japanese and English and Russians carrying on war as allies on the shores of the Pacific, Hindus and Mohammedans from India coming to fight in European armies on the old historic battle-fields of Europe, side by side with Mohammedans from Algiers and black men from Senegal. We had often spoken of the wonderful drawing together of the world in our days, but we never knew that it was to be represented in such strange and splendid and terrible bodily guise.

To our enemies the disregard of the 'colour bar' in the combination against them is a matter for reproach. We know already that they charge us with disloyalty to the cause of European culture, and we must be prepared to hear the charge flung against us with still greater passion when the war is over, and echoed in German books for generations to come. It has not yet appeared that they consider the employment of Indian and African troops a disloyalty : in the book, so often referred to, by General Bernhardt, the employment of 'coloured' troops by France and England is spoken of as something to be expected, with no note of blame ; it is our alliance with

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Japan that arouses their indignation. The difference is, no doubt, that Indian and African troops seem to be used merely as instruments for the purposes of the European Powers, whereas the European has entered into alliance with Japan as with an independent Power of equal standing ; that is the abominable thing !

The distinction here indicated may show an imperfect apprehension of the facts on the German side. The idea involved in the distinction, however, may help us to see the real significance of what is before our eyes. As a matter of fact, there is nothing very new or strange in the employment by a civilized Power of alien troops, as a weapon. It does not involve the admission of the aliens to any footing of equality. There is no question of co-operation in the real sense. They are used, just as horses are, as the instruments of a purpose not their own. The French had already used black troops against the Germans in the war of forty-four years ago. If we were merely using Indian troops in the same way, without any will of their own, there would be nothing so very remarkable in it. The mere fact, taken by itself, that Indians are fighting side by side with British soldiers is not the point. In India they have fought side by side with the British for one hundred and fifty years. What gives the moment its significance is that the presence of these Indian troops does not represent solely the purpose of England. It represents in some degree the will of India. However the complex of feelings which we describe as 'loyalty' in India is to be analysed—and a true analysis would probably

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differ largely in the cases, say, of a Rajput prince, a Parsi merchant, and a Bengali journalist—behind the Indian troops there is the general voluntary adherence of the leading classes in India, the fighting chiefs and the educated community, to the cause for which England stands. We may speak truly of co-operation in the case of India, as in the case of Japan.

It is the promptitude, the eagerness and the unanimity of this voluntary adherence which has seemed to England almost too good to be true. Some one present when Mr. Charles Roberts read to the House of Commons the message from India has reported that he had never before known the House so moved. After all, whatever the shortcomings of the British rule in India, there has been a great mass of good intention concerned in it; and we had been told so often that it was absurd to expect any recognition of good intentions from the mass of the Indian people. When, at the test, the recognition comes in such generous volume, we are almost taken aback, perhaps a little ashamed of what may seem a want of generosity in our own previous attitude; we are conscious of a new glow of friendliness not unmingled with compunction. The atmosphere is changed in temperature, and some of the barriers which seemed so dead-hard in the old days show a tendency to melt. Indian students moving about in London feel that the eyes which rest upon them are kindly and welcoming, and no longer hostile or suspicious. Almost in a moment the atmosphere has been changed, and that alone is a great thing. One

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cannot say what may come of it ; but things that seemed impossible before seem so no longer in the new day.

It was such a change in our temper as this that Christianity might have brought about, if it had been effectual. It is somewhat humiliating to think that it has been brought about, not by Christianity, but by participation in a war. The reason, one supposes, is that the British public generally has risen to the level represented by ' Love those who love you ', but not yet to the Christian level of loving in advance. It could not show any warmth of goodwill to the oriental stranger while he was still a dark mystery and his goodwill problematic ; the war has given occasion for him to prove his goodwill, and we hold him out the hand.

However true it may be that war is the outcome of sin, and productive of sin, we must recognize here too how good things are in strange wise brought out of evil by the divine art running through history. It looks as if the human family would really have made a step towards the ideal of brotherhood by waging war together, as if the cynic had some truth on his side, who said : ' There is no bond like a common enmity.' Each people will soon feel of all other peoples but one that they are brothers in arms ; we cannot imagine ourselves without a kindliness for many years to come towards French and Russians and Belgians. No doubt the fact that one has to make an exception in a brotherhood so conditioned—' to all other peoples but one '—shows it imperfect from the Christian point of view, shows something fatally defective

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in its basis. Yet here meanwhile is the new glow of friendliness, and we cannot do otherwise than recognize it as a good. It seems obvious wisdom to take it for all it is worth, and to work from it to something more. The 'colour bar', against which Christianity had beaten itself, largely in vain, has been weakened by another force. The other force has to that extent made the task of Christianity in the future easier. There is no reason why Christians should not be thankful for that.

### SHOULD THE 'COLOUR BAR' BE MAINTAINED?

But one must remember that the German people as represented, not only by its military caste, but by its thinkers and spiritual leaders—the persons, for instance, who signed the *Appeal to Evangelical Christians Abroad*—points to this very disregard of the 'colour bar' as an evil. It is probable that there are many amongst ourselves who sympathize with that view. Just at the present moment, while applause of India fills the press and the Japanese are being so obviously useful to us on the Pacific, such persons may not give utterance to their feelings, or their utterance may be drowned. But that many Englishmen shared all the colour prejudice of the Germans last July is certain, and it would be miraculous if in these few weeks all that inveterate prejudice had ceased to exist. When the applause dies down, the voices of these men will be heard again. We cannot afford to overlook their objection.

So far as the mere fact of a difference in complexion,

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taken by itself, is urged as a barrier which we should not try to transcend, the prejudice appears in a form so crude that it would perhaps be vain to argue with it. The antipathy of men of different complexions to each other, we are sometimes told, is something deep-lying and essential in human nature. This is just one of those would-be scientific generalizations which magazine-writers throw off without any vestige of real scientific examination. The considerations adduced by Professor Royce,<sup>1</sup> Lord Cromer,<sup>2</sup> and Mr. Basil Thomson<sup>3</sup> tend, on the other hand, to show that 'colour-feeling' is something of very recent appearance in the world, and generated to a large extent artificially by suggestion.

Where the objection to our close association with Indians and Japanese takes a more reasonable form it might perhaps be stated as follows: 'It is not the difference in complexion in itself' (so the objector might say) 'that matters; it is the fact that in the present state of the world a brown complexion and a yellow complexion go with a religion and culture and social tradition different from the tradition of Christendom. The white races represent a higher culture—or at any rate a culture that ought to be kept uncontaminated by alien elements. For this reason it is important that the material power of the white races, taken as a whole, should not be diminished as against the power

<sup>1</sup> *Race Questions* (Macmillan, 1908), pp. 1-53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient and Modern Imperialism*, pp. 128 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Bedrock*. Vol. I, pp. 157 f.

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of the non-European peoples. If the white races only fight amongst themselves, their power as a whole is not necessarily decreased; it may be merely shifted from one European nation to another. If, on the other hand, Asiatic peoples are allowed to take part in the struggle, Europe parts with some of its power to non-Europeans. The power of Europeans in the world', the objector might continue, 'is not entirely due to superior material force. It is largely a matter of prestige, of suggestion; the imagination of the other races must be held captive. In all conflicts, *morale* is a prime factor. It would be fatal for the predominance of Europeans if non-Europeans in large numbers lost the sense of the white man's superiority. If they face a European enemy and take part in his defeat, awe of the white man, as such, is gone.'

### THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

One surely cannot deny that this reasoning has something in it. It is true that we Christians believe the culture of Europe—permeated, however imperfectly so far, with Christianity—to have in it something of special value for the world. It is true that the position of Europeans as rulers, outside Europe, has in the past been secured largely by their impressing the imagination of the peoples they governed. It is further true that if this prestige, this control by suggestion, were taken away, and no better relation substituted for it, the result might be worse than the present state of things—a lapse of the East into chaos.



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*'And no better relation substituted for it'*—that is the great issue of the present crisis. We have been forced by events into a position where safety is to be found only by going forward. We are being called to new things ; the fatal thing is to stand still. While we are rightly glad and proud at the cordial advance of India, while the air is full of congratulation and applause, quiet reflection may recognize that the entry of India upon the scene has its dangers. It is big with possibilities of evil. For one thing, it means inevitably a disturbance of the situation in India. Yes, but it is big too with possibilities of good, because that disturbance of the situation may open the way to something much better. It would be a mistake to suppose that in the loyalty of India at the present moment we had attained everything ; we have really attained little, except an immense opportunity. It depends how we use it. We shall be less able after the war than before to take our stand in India on some supposed superiority of the white man, as such. We have given way on that ground. And to any one who would tell us that our sacrifice of the white man's prestige is rash and foolish, we can answer that in any case, even apart from the war, circumstances were forcing us from that ground. As European education spread in India, as India awoke more and more to the modern world, that ground would have become increasingly untenable. Sooner or later, if India remained a member of the British Empire, it would be because India chose the association voluntarily, intelligently, with head held high. By admitting India

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to co-operation in a European war, we have accelerated the disappearance of the old imaginative awe. But the war has given us an opportunity we could never have forecast of substituting for the old relation a new relation built on the consciousness of great dangers faced and great things done together, feelings of mutual friendship and respect and trust. In the kindled atmosphere of the present moment, when hearts are warm and quickly stirred, things may take a new shape which time will so solidify that the attachment of the British and Indian peoples to each other in the future will be stronger than any bond which conquests of the old style could fashion. It all depends, as has been said, how we use the opportunity.

The cry that a Christian Power which in any circumstances enters into co-operation and alliance with a non-Christian Power against Christians commits an act of treachery seems to spring from a deeper loyalty to Christianity. But, to be honest, is the motive behind the declamatory protest after all not just the old bad feeling of race prejudice, the pride of the white colour, which is the very antithesis of real Christianity? What is really the source of the cry is the refusal to acknowledge that the whole human race is all potentially one in Christ. It departs from the fundamental principles of Christianity—the principle of truth and the principle of charity. It departs from the principle of truth, because it goes by names and appearances and labels, instead of by realities. The nations of Europe have become Christian only to a very imperfect degree. When the action of a so-called

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Christian State is determined by the very anti-Christian principles of national egoism and 'will to power' it is untrue to regard it as a Christian State, even if one can point to a nucleus of real Christianity among its people. Supposing we wished to present a false appearance to the non-Christian world, to cover up the truth for fear of scandal, it would be in vain. The sooner the non-Christian world realizes that Christendom is not yet Christian, the better for the prospects of Christianity. And whilst one has to admit a great mass of paganism, still unleavened, in Christendom, one ought to recognize in all that is morally sound in the non-Christian civilizations something germane to Christianity, something due to the same Spirit who is fully manifested in Christ.

Even apart from the direct action of Christianity upon these races in recent times, that would be true. But we know, as a matter of fact, that just as in England and France and Germany there has been a nucleus of real Christianity for many centuries, influencing in various degrees the national life as a whole, so there is now in India and China and Japan a nucleus of real Christianity, whose influence is already making itself felt far outside the limits of the organized Church. In the case of the individual, it is a part of Christian charity to recognize, even when the Christian name is not assumed, the fruit of the Christian spirit: in the same way, to label the Asiatic peoples of to-day in that absolute way as non-Christians, to shut them out from co-operation in the work of establishing righteousness in the world, where

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they are prepared to act on righteous principles, is not only a disloyalty to truth but a breach of Christian charity. And that is not the way to win Asia for the Universal Church.

Of one thing we may be sure : neither Europe nor Asia will be left by the war the same as before. It is too soon to affirm that they will be made better by it. A harvest of good will not come automatically out of this convulsion. Its outcome, for good or evil, will be determined largely by the action of England, by the action of the Christian Church, at this crucial time. It may be that neither England, nor the Christian Church, will ever be given such an opportunity again.



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